Language Policy

This policy should be considered alongside and in conjunction with Halcyon's Curriculum & Assessment Policy and Admissions Policy.

1. Introduction

This policy is a working document developed by teachers and the school administration. The policy is consistent with the stipulated principles and practices of The International Baccalaureate. This document outlines the school's language and academic goals and defines the programme, which is designed to help our students attain these goals. This policy will be revised as the programmes develop and expand.

This policy is intended to provide an overview and guiding principles for language learning at the school, through authentic contexts in a culturally-rich and diverse environment. This policy is a mission-driven statement to which the entire school community is asked to commit.

2. Objectives

The school aims to nurture an appreciation of the richness and diversity of language. Language does much more than promote cognitive growth; it is crucial for developing and maintaining personal cultural identity and the development of international-mindedness. The acquisition of more than one language, and the maintenance of the mother tongue, enrich personal growth and help facilitate international understanding. **As language, by its very nature, is integrated into all areas of the curriculum, every teacher within the school is considered a language teacher.**

Halcyon aims to foster in students the ability to think and express themselves, in at least two languages, with precision, clarity, confidence and imagination. The school strives to address the particular challenges of those students who are learning in a language other than their mother tongue. The school also endeavours to integrate students' cultural and linguistic heritage throughout the curriculum.

3. Language Profiles and Admissions Policy

A. The School Language Profile

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English is the language of instruction at Halcyon. Some students will be deemed English Language Learners (ELL) and many different mother tongues will be represented in the community. All of Halcyon's administrative and teaching staff speak English and ideally are also competent communicators in at least one other language.

B. Admissions Policy

Halcyon's Admissions Policy states:

> *'Students must have sufficient English language proficiency to be able to access learning. The school reserves the right not to admit applicants whose command of English would not allow them to access the curriculum and have a reasonable opportunity for success.'*

As part of the admissions process, applicants are required to provide information about their proficiency in English, their mother tongue (if a language other than English), and any other languages. English language proficiency is evidenced through a variety of means including: previous school reports and transcripts; previous standardised testing; writing samples and oral interview, as a part of the admissions process; and external examinations. Any applicant who indicates that English is not their mother tongue, and whose fluency/proficiency may not allow them immediate access to the mainstream curriculum, will be asked to take a standardised test to assess their proficiency. Those who require additional support will be offered access to our English Plus programme.

C. Language Programmes

Halcyon requires students to study two languages.

I. Language A

All IB MYP and IB DP students must study a Language A. Halcyon offers English and Spanish as a Language and Literature courses, grades 6 - 12. English is also the language of instruction.

Halcyon facilitates a number of Mother-Tongue tutors to support other Languages A, depending on demand, grades 6 - 12.

In Grade 10, some students may be allowed to opt-out of Language B, an acquired language, in favour of a Language A, their mother tongue. The language profile of individuals and their progression will be considered when advising students on their language

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placement.

Each student's Language A course at IB DP should be their best language, usually their mother tongue language. This may take into account the extent of continuous academic engagement the student has had with his/her mother tongue and any identified areas that require learning support. If the student continues on to the IB DP, the school will follow the minimum hours recommended by the IB for courses in Groups 1 and 2 (150 in SL, 240 in HL).

II. Language B

All IB MYP and IB DP students must study an acquired language. Halcyon offers Spanish and Mandarin, grades 6 - 12

Students are placed in the appropriate language class based at the start of the academic year. Students are placed by previous academic performance; newly enrolled students may also be given an additional placement assessment. Language B classes have no more than two phases per class. Teachers utilise differentiated instruction to meet the needs of the different language learners in each class.

Halcyon provides an **English Plus Programme**, grades 6 -10, for students who are not fully able to access the mainstream curriculum and require additional English language support.

III. Additional Mother Tongue Languages

Halcyon's mother tongue language programme covers both Language A and Language B courses. We recognise that students may still be acquiring, or need to re-acquire, a language that might be spoken in the home or with which they have a strong personal identification.

The school believes that developing a student's mother tongue can accelerate the rate of English language acquisition, support achievement in all subject areas, increase self-esteem, and enhance intercultural understanding and international-mindedness. The programme is overseen by Halcyon's **Mother Tongue Coordinator**, and this includes sourcing appropriate tutors, providing teaching resources, and leading professional training.

During the IB MYP, mother tongue language classes can fall into two main categories:

Category I
Mother tongue support can be made available for those students who wish to nurture their mother tongue development. This would normally be for up to two lessons per week and

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would be scheduled outside of the normal timetable. These classes would not be included in formal reports but the learning would be formatively assessed.

In some instances, students may need to keep up with their own national curriculum. This may require special arrangements that the school will try to organise.

Category II
It is recommended that the students wishing to attain a bilingual IB Diploma undertake mother tongue lessons during their IB MYP years. It is strongly recommended that such students take a minimum of two lessons per week in Grades 10. These lessons will be assessed according to IB MYP criteria and will be included in semester subject reports if the teacher is suitably trained and experienced.

4. Assessment

While language acquisition follows distinct stages, students' rate of acquisition varies greatly from individual to individual. Therefore, teachers regularly assess all language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) differentiating through scaffolding or extension as required. Formative and summative assessments in the classroom provide information on the development of language fluency. Teachers may standardise students' work, and differentiate by task and assessment, to ensure a fair application of assessment criteria. Standardised tests such as WIDA, and the International Schools' Assessment (ISA) also provide evidence of language acquisition levels.

5. Professional Development

As it is an expectation for all teachers to be language teachers, on-going training focused on integrated language instruction will be a priority for professional development.

The IB Coordinators ensure that teachers receive appropriate on-going professional development opportunities and check that strategies are successfully implemented. The English Plus teacher and Learning Coach (SEN) advise and support the subject teachers in the use of differentiation and language acquisition strategies, and assist with their lesson planning. The English Plus teacher also provides English Plus students with strategies, across subject areas, for the development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

6. SUPPORT SERVICES
A. Language learning and the Halcyon Digital Library
Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content

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and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning. An information-literate individual is able to:

I. determine the extent of information needed;
II. access the needed information effectively and efficiently;
III. evaluate information and sources critically.

The role of the Halcyon Digital Library is to promote and facilitate information literacy across all subject areas and to all members of the school community. The Halcyon Digital Library has databases that contain professional pedagogical material, scholarly articles, and periodicals in many languages. Sessions are offered to the school community on information literacy and research skills.

B. Westminster Libraries

In addition to the school's own resources, the school is a member of the Westminster Schools Libraries Service which provides additional books, learning resources and training programmes. All the school students can be registered as members of Westminster Libraries, and are urged to take out library membership for their local borough (if not Westminster).

C. Special Educational Needs

When a student has been identified with additional learning needs, including language difficulties or gifted and talented abilities, intervention and support are provided through differentiation by mainstream subject teachers in consultation with the IB Coordinators and Halcyon's Learning Coach.

7. PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

A. Parental Involvement

Parents are an integral part of the school community of learners and may provide important support for language learning at the school. The school uses various means to communicate to parents the critical importance of maintaining academic proficiency in the mother tongue. Parental engagement is important for successful mother tongue acquisition. Parents also have a role to play in providing language support groups for some of the mother tongues represented at the school, or by translating documents and interpreting during meetings. The school also offers a range of curricular workshops for parents and the wider community, and these will include on the importance of maintaining mother tongue languages

B. Published Materials

Students, parents and staff members at the school come from many different countries and educational systems. To maintain consistency in published materials, UK English spelling

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will be used for our formal written documentation. However, teachers and students may use their native country's spelling and punctuation for all other work provided it is employed consistently throughout the document.

References

International Baccalaureate Organization (2011). Language and Learning in IB Programmes.

International Baccalaureate Organization (2008). Learning in a Language Other Than Mother Tongue in IB Programmes.

International Baccalaureate Organization (2011). Towards a Continuum of International Education.

International Baccalaureate Organization Language acquisition guide (for use from September 2020/January 2021)

International Baccalaureate Organization Language A: literature guide (first assessment 2021)

International Baccalaureate Organization Language A: language and literature guide (first assessment 2021)

Approved by Board of Trustees, October 2012. Reviewed 9 August 2013.
Revised 18 June 2014. Revised 5 October 2015.
Approved by Board of Trustees 17 February 2016.
Revised August 2020. Approved by Board of Trustees 24 September 2020.

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the curriculum review cycle, or more regularly in light of any significant changes in statutory requirements and legislation.

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